

MENTORING, TYPE AND COPING WITH CHANGE

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ABSTRACT

Formal **mentoring** programs can help meet organizational goals. A case study at Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology illustrates the key elements of a successful mentoring program. In the full-day training session, interpretation of two tools (the **Myers-Briggs** Type Indicator and Invest in Your Values) helps participants to understand and appreciate the wide range of human norms. Career training within the program helps individuals cope with change.

MENTORING DEFINED

The word "mentor" has its origin in Greek mythology. Odysseus entrusted his son, **Telemachus**, to his friend and advisor, Mentor, who served as counselor, advisor, and teacher. In today's terms, a mentor can be generally defined as someone who helps a less experienced protege through counseling, advising, sponsoring, guiding, motivating, and coaching.

Traditional **mentoring** relationships are informal, long-term and involve the protege's personal and professional life. Typically, mentors choose their proteges. More often than not, a mentor will choose someone like himself which has eliminated many women and minorities from being mentored by someone 'in an influential position. The mentor is usually the dominant partner and the relationship is unstructured and natural. Traditional mentoring benefits the protege but may have little impact on the organization's business objectives.

Formal **mentoring** is becoming more popular in the work environment. Organizations can tie the mentoring program to strategic goals and can affect targeted populations. Formal mentoring can serve as a change agent. It can help the organization to reduce turnover, increase productivity, increase creativity, and manage the career development of its employees. Mentoring can maintain and communicate the culture of the organization, increase the effectiveness of initiating employees, encourage the development of minorities and females, and increase networking and teamwork. Another important benefit to the organization is feedback, which may not have existed prior to any formal program. For example, if the targeted population is new graduates, management can learn about the new graduate's expectations, career perceptions, dislikes, concerns, issues, and questions about the organization. Management can use this information in understanding and in making decisions about that population.

The organization benefits from the program's meeting specific organizational needs and the protege benefits by having access to the mentor's insight and experience. A successful formal **mentoring** program must define the need being met by the program and define the target population. It must determine the selection and matching proteges and

mentors, design the method of training and delivery, and use a measurement feedback system to assist in continuous improvement. It must also have adequate resources in funding and sponsorship by top management. This paper will explore a specific mentoring program and highlight results of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator aspect of the program's measurement system.

KEY ELEMENTS OF A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAM

- Define the organizational need; define desired results
- Get buy-in from management and a "champion" of the cause
- Benchmark other mentoring programs
- Design a program with periodic evaluations to check for desired results
- Redesign the program as needed based upon feedback from participants and management sponsors
- Provide a system of ongoing visibility for the program
- Have the program coordinator become active in a mentoring network

A CASE STUDY

Jet Propulsion Laboratory, California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, California is a science research facility of approximately six thousand employees involved in unmanned space exploration and related technical programs under a contract with the National Aeronautic and Space Administration (NASA). In October 1989 JPL began a pilot program to improve retainment of salaried new graduates by providing them with mentors to help them more easily assimilate into the JPL culture. The program was successful in improving new graduates' retention and it was also successful in improving work performance. The program was expanded to include experienced salaried new hires. By July 1994, 315 mentor-protege pairs had participated in the program.

To begin the program exempt new graduates and new hires are informed by their line management of their eligibility to participate in the mentoring program. Most elect to do so. Senior managers interview the proteges and solicit mentors from experienced employees whose interests and background relate to the protege's long-term goals. The commitment of assistance is for six-months. The formal relationship officially begins with a full-day training session, an essential part of a formal mentoring program.

The training session includes facilitated interactive exercises to help the mentors and proteges in successfully starting their relationship. These exercises include an explanation of the expectations and limits and/or restrictions placed on the relationship due to the structure of the program. Training is used to:

- focus the mentor and/or protege on their specific roles and responsibilities,
- increase their interpersonal and communication skills,
- provide a better understanding of the issues, goals, and nature of the relationship,
- examine and expose differences and similarities,

- develop specific goals and objectives,
- explore career issues and networking capabilities, and
- discuss the organization's culture and strategic business objectives.

The program uses **two** commercial training tools to help prepare the proteges and mentors for their relationship. Interpretation of the results of the "Myers Briggs Type Indicator" (MBTI) helps the pairs in understanding their communication styles and in addressing possible obstacles that may impede their interaction. "Invest in Your Values" by Insight Publications allows the mentor and protege to identify their values and to determine if those values are being met in their current work environment. Similarities and differences are highlighted by both tools. They also help people to see a wide range of "normal" human behavior, an action that promotes understanding of and tolerance for diversity.

Throughout a six-month period, two written evaluations and two feedback sessions are conducted. Ongoing program evaluations are important to measure the effectiveness of the program. A database, in which the status of participants is continuously updated, is used to track and evaluate the program. Retention rates of new graduates and new hires are easily observable. Feedback from participants has resulted in program enhancements and increased efficiency. Continuous feedback to management is an additional element in the evaluation loop. Status reports are regularly scheduled with upper management to discuss successes and concerns. This also allows management to remain actively involved in the program and ensures continued support and buy-in by line and upper management.

Mentors and proteges are provided with a directory that lists all the participants in the program since 1989. When they have completed the formal six-month program, they may choose to maintain the relationship if both parties wish. Upon completion of the program, they are awarded certificates by their line management. They receive continued support from the mentoring program by being invited to periodic presentations on various topics. They also provide support to the program by being guest speakers at new training sessions,

The Mentoring Coordinator is active in the Mentor Network, part of the federal government's literacy program. The Mentor Network consists of small groups of professionals, in designated areas, who meet regularly to discuss issues and concerns of the members. Another organization called the National Mentor **Association** holds an annual conference and periodically publishes information on **mentoring**. The Mentoring Institute Inc. conducts workshops, consults, and publishes a quarterly journal on mentoring. These all provide opportunities to learn more about mentoring and allow the coordinator to network with other professionals.

HOW MENTORING CAN HELP WITH TYPE DIVERSITY ISSUES

The **Myers-Briggs** Type Indicator was selected to help the mentoring pairs with a common language in understanding similarities and differences. The mentors and proteges were given Self-Scoring Form G at the beginning of the training session. After a group interpretation using the four Keirseyan temperaments of SJ, SP, NT, and NF, pairs were encouraged to share their types and discuss how they might be similar or different. The training emphasized understanding the wide range of normal human behavior.

The four temperaments are described using the work of David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates, Please Understand Me and Olaf Isachsen and Linda V. Berens, Working Together. The temperament skills are linked to significant issues in the organization:

- NT- space exploration, new knowledge--to go where no one has ever gone before
- SJ -to ensure reliability-- there is no Auto Club in space
- NF - public education -to enlighten inquisitive minds
- SP - the FASTER in the desire for Faster, Better, Cheaper

Understanding the differing temperaments has helped pairs communicate more readily and has helped new graduates understand their unique talents more quickly.

The tool, "Invest in Your Values," is also used to generate conversation between the pairs. The instrument has thirty-five listed values. The participants have only seven pots of money. They must select which seven of the thirty-five values are most meaningful to them. Then they must rate how well their current life style or work situation is satisfying each of those seven selected values. The pairs then compare their selections. Mentor assistance is given through the filter of personal values. Using this tool has helped to uncover hidden assumptions. For instance, a mentor whose highest value is "Being Loyal at Work" will normally advise a protege through this filter. When the mentor learns that the protege's highest value is "Challenging Myself Intellectually," the mentor usually makes some adjustments or additions in the type of advice given. With use of this tool, differing values are now visible and the mentoring process becomes more effective.

Mentors and proteges report that the tools have helped them to understand each other and to communicate with each other more effectively. Management reports that increased **self-**understanding by the proteges has an impact upon personal production and ease of communication with others.

COPING WITH CHANGE

Within the full-day mentoring training, the career development segment focuses on understanding the JPL culture and becoming productive members of positive change. Mentors and proteges are *given* separate training experiences. Mentors are encouraged to brainstorm how they can help the protege become more comfortable and productive in the JPL culture. Proteges are encouraged to build a network among themselves and the mentors. The following themes are emphasized: scanning the environment for changes,

making and setting goals, keeping one's skills up to date, developing an effective communication and feedback network, and being flexible. The proteges also receive a list of organizational resources that help people deal with change.

SUMMARY

With support from management and an effective feedback/correction system, a formal mentoring program can help meet organizational goals. Interpretation of two tools (the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator and Invest in Your Values) helps participants to understand and appreciate the wide range of human norms. Assistance with career issues during the training section of the program aids individuals in becoming aware of organizational resources to help them deal with change.

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Zey, M. G. The Mentor Connection. Strategic Alliances in Corporate Life. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 1991.

OTHER RESOURCES

National Mentoring Association

A-121 Ellsworth Hall

Wester Michigan University

1201 Oliver Street

Kalamazoo, MI 49008-5161

(616) 387-4174

The Mentoring Institute

1200 West Pender Street Suite 510

Vancouver, B.C. Canada V6E 2S9

(604) 684-4134

The Mentor Network

Part of One PLUS One Project Literacy, In partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor
4802 Fifth Ave.

Pittsburgh, PA 15213

(412) 622-1491

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